In Memoriam: Nirav P. Patel

Nalaka Gooneratne, M.D., F.A.A.S.M.¹; Michael Grandner, Ph.D.¹; Alec Platt, M.D.²; with contributions from Nirav's family

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Nirav P. Patel, M.D., M.P.H., F.C.C.P., F.A.A.S.M., born in Nadiad, India, raised in London, England, and resident of Wyomissing, Pennsylvania, and physician specializing in sleep disorders, pulmonary medicine and critical care, passed away suddenly on May 17, 2012, of a myocardial infarction from coronary atherosclerosis. He was 37 years old. Dr. Patel's career was devoted to helping patients with sleep and pulmonary disorders. He was recognized as not only an outstanding clinician, but also as a superb teacher and researcher.

Dr. Patel dedicated his research career to advancing our understanding and awareness of the public health impact of sleep disorders. He was especially interested in poverty's negative effects on sleep. He believed that sleep was a link between social inequality and adverse health outcomes. His research examined insufficient sleep attainment by people in disadvantaged groups (such as minorities and the poor)—a situation he called “sleep disparity”—and the reasons why these groups often have worse long-term health outcomes. He worked tirelessly to help increase awareness of the negative effects of inadequate sleep, such as increased risk of diabetes, motor vehicle accidents, and cardiovascular disease, through participation in community health fairs, his work as a board member of the Pennsylvania Sleep Society, and his numerous research publications. In 2008, he organized a “Population Sleep” conference at the University of Pennsylvania, which was attended by over a hundred participants from across the nation. He was instrumental in adding sleep questions to the Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC) annual survey, a key regional assessment of public health in the Philadelphia area. Despite his brief career, he has published extensively: His research, consisting of 36 manuscripts and 26 abstracts, has been published in leading journals in the sleep and pulmonary medicine communities, such as the journal *SLEEP*, and has been presented at international conferences.

Dr. Patel began his medical education at Guys, Kings & St Thomas University Medical School, King's College in London, United Kingdom. He moved to the Philadelphia area in 2001, where he completed his internal medicine training at Albert Einstein Medical Center. He then came to the University of Pennsylvania for a fellowship in pulmonary medicine, critical care and sleep medicine. He joined the faculty of the Division of Sleep Medicine in 2008 where he was an Assistant Professor of Medicine. He also completed a Masters of Public Health at the University of Pennsylvania in 2009. Throughout his training and subsequent

career, he loved caring for and learning about complex medical conditions. This passion led to numerous awards, including the Howard Rogers Prize for Medicine and the Exemplary House Physician award from University Hospital Lewisham (United Kingdom). Dr. Patel was also a member of the 2006 winning team for the nationwide American College of Chest Physicians “Chest Challenge” competition.

Dr. Patel left the University of Pennsylvania in 2009 to take a position at Respiratory Specialists in Wyomissing, Pennsylvania, where he also attended at The Reading Hospital Medical Center and St. Josephs Medical Center. He quickly developed a reputation as a kind, committed and hard-working physician who received awards for outstanding physician house staff teaching and showed that his love of learning extended to a desire to share that knowledge with others. Despite his significant clinical workload, he continued to be actively involved in public health, pulmonary and sleep medicine research activities, which recently resulted in his being considered for Adjunct Assistant Professor of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania.

Those of us who knew Dr. Patel remember his vitality, commitment and incredible perseverance. In 2006, he was a passenger in a severe motor vehicle accident that resulted in debilitating elbow injuries which ultimately required five separate operations and left him with chronic pain and reduced arm mobility. Despite this traumatic, near-death experience, he maintained his optimism, love of life and family, and commitment to patient care and research. We are fortunate to have had his star burn so brightly in our presence even for this short time.

His philosophy in life was to never to put off till tomorrow what you can do today. His interests included connecting with people, traveling, and sports. His passion, however, was being there and helping people. Dr. Patel is survived by his wife, Minal, son Ariyan (age 5), daughter Rhea (age 3), and by his parents and sister, of London, England.